

Sudan – South Sudan Relations Analysis: November 27, 2012 – December 11, 2012

The Abyei Deadline Failure and Future Border Cooperation

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The Abyei region continues to be a focal problem for relations between North and South Sudan. South Sudan has called for greater African Union involvement in ensuring the resolution runs smoothly, with Luka Biong Deng, Co-Chair of the Abyei Oversight Committee for South Sudan (AOCSS), asking for greater leadership from the regional body in order to avoid larger international intervention.¹ In response, Sudan continues to resist any resolution plan which does not include the enfranchisement of the Misseriya nomads.² Sudan has been staging a diplomatic campaign, appealing to Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Lesotho, for support in avoiding a UNSC decision.³ With the failure of the AU December 5th, 2012 deadline for a brokered solution to Abyei, the regional body's credibility has diminished.⁴ Nevertheless, Sudan foreign minister Ali Karti told the Agence France Presse news agency that he believes the AU will not transfer the proposal to the UNSC. The only clear result of the December 5 deadline failure is the solidification of the belief that the decision on the Abyei region will not come from inter-Sudanese negotiations. The regional community will decide the fate of the region, either on its own, or through its referral to the UNSC.

With the exception of Abyei, border relations have normalized since the Sudanese border bombing in later November. South Sudan's chief negotiator and Sudan's Defense Minister have engaged in what have been referred to as "successful" talks over border security, however, neither side has completely withdrawn their troops from the 10km buffer zone agreed upon in the Addis Ababa Agreement of September 27, 2012.⁵ Both parties understand the importance of these successes as keys toward resumption of oil cooperation.⁶ Oil has always been the point for proactive negotiations between the two states. As the economies of both North and South Sudan suffer, oil has become the catalyst for cooperation on security concerns. While Sudan remains wary of South Sudan's relationship with the SPLM-N insurgents, South Sudan has reasserted its desire to help with negotiations between the SMPL-N and Sudan.⁷

¹ "Abyei Referendum: S. Sudan Now Seeks AU Intervention." *Sudan Tribune*, sec. News, November 30, 2012. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44697> (accessed November 30, 2012).

² "Abyei Referendum: S. Sudan Now Seeks AU Intervention." *Sudan Tribune*, sec. News, November 30, 2012. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44697> (accessed November 30, 2012).

³ "Abyei: South Sudanese Activities Urge AU and UNSC Involvement." *Sudan Tribune*, sec. News, December 3, 2012. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44711> (accessed December 3, 2012).

⁴ Independent radio and news site funded by UNMISS & an NGO, Radio Miraya (December 5, 2012).

⁵ "South Sudan Holds Successful Talks With Sudan on Border Dispute." *Reuters*, independent international news agency, London, December 2, 2012. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/02/us-sudan-south-border-idUSBRE8B104C20121202> (accessed December 2, 2012).

⁶ "South Sudan Holds Successful Talks With Sudan on Border Dispute." *Reuters*, independent international news agency, London, December 2, 2012. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/02/us-sudan-south-border-idUSBRE8B104C20121202> (accessed December 2, 2012).

⁷ "Oil to Flow Again: Pagan," independent radio and news site funded by UNMISS & an NGO, Radio Miraya (December 3, 2012).

As Abyei is a border area, its resolution is inseparable from the general resolution of border security. While Sudan seems to have successfully deflected its regionally imposed responsibilities on Abyei, the continuation of oil transportation does necessitate their cooperation. While the international community will be forced to take greater control to press progress on Abyei, this does not mean that the two Sudanese state's self-created cooperation is not necessary. The AU deadline may have failed, however; the oil negotiations do display a model for progress.